

Wednesday, December 10, 2003

Family-like atmosphere

Children's Home provides opportunity for change

From reading "Julius Caesar" and "Silas Marner" to building houses and cutting hair, the young people at the **Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home (ISSCH)** have

plenty of options to help them prepare for the future.

The Children's Home, which is part of the Indiana State Department of Health, offers a second chance to at-risk youth from Indiana. The residential facility is located just south of Knightstown and provides educational, social, recreational, and counseling opportunities for boys and girls between the ages of three and 18.

Susan's home life was chaotic, and she never dreamed she'd go to college. But now she's taking the Core 40 college prep classes offered at ISSCH's Morton Memorial High School. Ivy Tech could be in her future.

Samuel was being raised by his grandmother, and she couldn't control him. He was surly and disrespectful. Now Samuel

is reading a blueprint and helping construct a 2,200-square-foot house as part of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home's building trades program.

He is focused and fun to be around.

These are just a couple of examples of the changes that can occur at the Home, says Paul Wilkinson, the school's superintendent.

Wilkinson says Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors'

Children's Home is more than just a school, providing a family-like atmosphere for the youngsters and becoming a home for those who live there. He says that with a well-rounded curriculum, extracurricular activities, and group living, ISSCH offers its young family members social and leadership skills, as well as vocational and academic opportunities.

The vocational program at the Home includes building trades, barbering, dental assisting, cosmetology, culinary arts, graphic arts, telecommunications, natural resource management, veterinary science, and business office management.

On a tidy cul-de-sac in Knightstown is Trotters Court housing edition, with a half dozen or so houses.

Four of the houses – three are occupied and one is under construction and soon to be offered for sale – are projects of the ISSCH building trades program. Students work on the houses from start to finish, from constructing the frame and finishing the walls to the plumbing and wiring, Wilkinson says. The brick work is subcontracted.

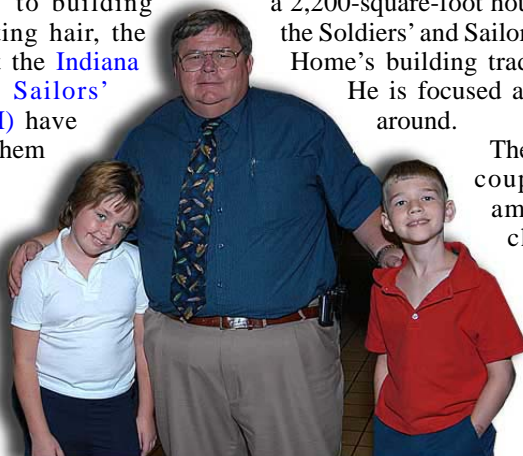
Eight to 10 students under the guidance of the construction teacher work on a house, and it takes about 18 months to build each house, Wilkinson says. Construction is done during two three-hour blocks each day,

which includes a brief classroom meeting to go over the day's plan. When one house is finished, the next begins.

"The houses are done 'on spec,'" he explains. "We buy the lot, the house plan, and all the materials. After the house is finished, we get an appraisal, and sell the house. The money goes into the student activities fund for future project houses, and the interest is used for student activities."

The most recently finished house sold for \$144,000. The brick, three-bedroom, two-bath home is 2,200 square feet and has a living room, dining room, breakfast area with French windows, and an attached two-car garage.

"The houses turn a small profit, which



Children's Home superintendent Paul Wilkinson stands with students Samantha and Chris.

Photo by Daniel Axler

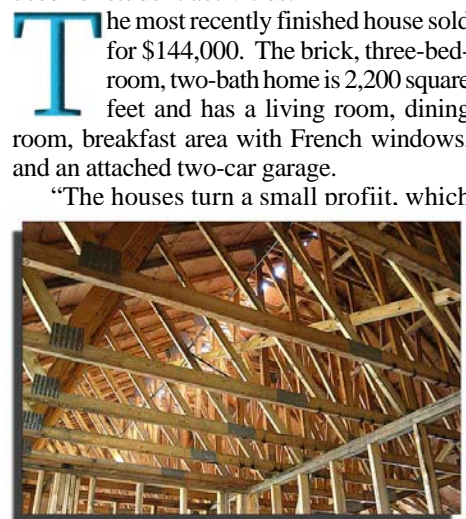


Photo by Daniel Axler

A look at the under-construction ceiling of one of building trades houses.

is used for tools and materials for the class," Wilkinson says. "Plus the kids receive hands-on education. It's been a good business venture."

The other vocational programs also provide educational and employment benefits.

"The students in barbering, dental assisting, and cosmetology work on students and staff at the Home. After they finish the required number of clock hours, they can take the state board exam and be licensed," Wilkinson said.

Dental assisting students begin by working chair-side with the Home's contracted dentist, and eventually will work at various dental offices in the community.

The vocational program also draws more than 100 students from the surrounding communities. The tuition for these students is paid by the local school districts and helps support the vocational program.



Photo by Daniel Axler

Children's Home English teacher Diana Darling helps Megan with analogies in sophomore English. Megan is preparing for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

Home: Getting a foot in the employment door

(continued from page 1)



Photo by Daniel Axler

Culinary arts teacher Dennis Richardson shows off the jars of dried bell peppers, duck sauce, and salsa that the students made. Looking on is home economics teacher Lou Richardson.

In the culinary arts program, students work toward ServSafe Certification, a food industry standard in food safety training. Dennis Richardson, culinary arts teacher, says this certification gets the students "a step in the door" when they seek employment.

In Richardson's classroom are jars of student-made dried bell peppers, salsa, and Chinese duck sauce. On some mornings the students prepare breakfast, and the aroma of sausage gravy, homemade biscuits, hash brown potatoes, cheese potatoes with bacon, and southwest eggs wafts down the hall of the Eder Vocational Building.

Shrimp Alfredo, broccoli stuffed chicken breasts, crepes, and student-pounded 10-inch tenderloins also are on the learning menu.

For special occasions, the young cooking students will don chef hats, black scarves, white shirts, and black checkered pants to serve guests like the superintendents of surrounding school corporations or ISSCH advisory committee members.

Another program that the Home is known for is the Junior

ROTC program, which draws about 60 student cadets, Wilkinson says.

Retired Lt. Col. John Riley is the senior instructor. He says the Junior ROTC program is a citizenship program rather than a military program and teaches responsibility, teamwork, and cooperation. There is a para-military component for drill and rifle competition.

Last summer, three cadets had the opportunity to attend Culver Academy Summer Camp.

Junior ROTC is a motivator to succeed in school, Riley says.

"If the kids get in academic difficulty, they can't afford the time to take JROTC," he says. "They work hard to do well in their other classes because they enjoy the JROTC activities."

The rifle marksmanship team has won several awards, some at the national level, Riley says. Their record so far this season stands at 27 wins, no losses.

"The team has developed to be a nationally known team," he says. "People are beginning to recognize that at-risk kids can attain to a level of national recognition."

Cattle are also a part of the Children's Home. The ISSCH's 45-acre Double M Farm, under the direction of foreman Jeff Hamm, raises Angus cattle and participates in an embryo transplant program. Currently, there are 22 cows and nine calves in the herd.

On the walls of the barn, which was built with the help of the building trades class, hang banners proclaiming 4-H Champion, Reserve Grand Champion, and North America International Livestock Expo 2001. Hamm, who is also the 4-H leader, says it's not unusual for a student to come over to the farm in the wee hours of the morning to help with a difficult calving – just like in a real farm family.

The state of Indiana provides funding for the Children's Home, with parents contributing on a sliding scale. Donations from the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary,

Sons of the American Legion, AMVETS, and other sponsors provide for special programming, renovations, equipment, items for the children, and other needs.

The flag pole in the center of campus, the fountains in Lake Graham, the deck at the edge of the lake – all were provided by American Legion organizations.

"You can't look anywhere around here without seeing some patriotic organization project," says Superintendent Wilkinson.

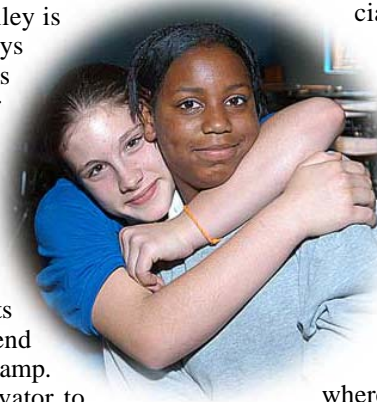


Photo above by Dan Axler:
Students Keisha and Jazmine



Photo by Daniel Axler

The fountain in front of the administration building at the Children's Home.

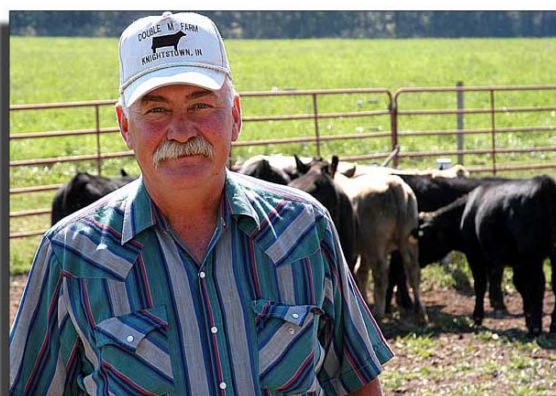


Photo by Daniel Axler

Jeff Hamm, foreman of the Double M Farm, stands by some of the farm's Angus cows.

The Express

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Health officials following up on human West Nile virus cases

The mosquito season is over in Indiana for 2003, but state health officials are still following up on some probable human West Nile virus cases.

On November 21, the State Department of Health announced the death of an individual from Jennings County who was identified as a probable case of West Nile virus and reported three new probable human cases of West Nile virus in Adams, Delaware, and Kosciusko counties.

To date, four deaths have been attributed to probable West Nile virus. The other three were in Allen, Henry, and Lake counties.

Seventy-one Indiana counties have shown evidence of West Nile virus activity in 2003. The 41 probable human cases in the state this year range from less than 1 year to 85 years of age. In 2002, Indiana had 293 human West Nile virus cases, including 11 deaths.

"Cooler temperatures and flooding in some parts of the state helped to reduce the

number of human West Nile virus cases we saw this year," said James Howell, DVM, veterinary epidemiologist at the State Department of Health.

Health officials say that people can protect their family and their community next season from the mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus by taking these actions now:

- ▶ Repairing failed septic systems;
- ▶ Drilling holes in the bottom of recy-

cling containers that are left out of doors;

▶ Keeping grass cut short and shrubbery trimmed;

▶ Disposing of old tires, tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, or other unused containers that can hold water;

▶ Cleaning clogged roof gutters, particularly if leaves tend to plug up the drains; and

▶ Aerating ornamental pools, or stocking them with predatory fish.

The State Department of Health took strong steps in 2003 to monitor and control the spread of West Nile virus in Indiana. Some of the actions taken include:

✓ Developed a West Nile virus brochure and distributed approximately 180,000 copies in English and 44,000 copies in Spanish.

✓ Wrote and recorded seven radio public service announcements (PSAs) on West Nile virus, which were e-mailed to radio stations statewide. The Indiana Broadcasters Association endorsed these PSAs through an e-mail to all of its members.

✓ Hosted a West Nile virus educational booth at the 2003 Black & Minority Health Fair in Indianapolis in July.

✓ Provided training through the Consumer Protection Division to local health departments on mosquito identification and control to improve data gathering and assist in controlling mosquito-borne illnesses like West Nile virus.

Working as a banker is better than robbing a bank



Photo by Daniel Axler
Stained glass depiction of a Civil War soldier. The window hangs in Lincoln Hall auditorium on the Children's Home campus.

Bryan Harris is an assistant vice president and commercial loan analyst for Fifth Third Bank in Indianapolis.

He's also a 1979 graduate of Morton Memorial High School at the Indiana Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home

(ISSCH).

"Without the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home I would probably be robbing banks instead of working at one," Harris says about the state-operated facility, which is part of the Indiana State Department of Health.

A child of an abusive and neglected home life, Harris came to the Children's Home as an 8th grader.

His parents had divorced and remarried several times, and he had moved from school district to school district about every six months.

He says the courts decided he needed to be removed from this unhealthy environment into a more stable environ-

ment where he could get a good education.

"I didn't like being there at first," Harris said. "But the Home turned out to be my savior."

With a chuckle, Harris added that he was co-valedictorian of his graduating class — a class of 20.

Because of his unique student perspective, Harris, who lives in Greenwood, was appointed to the facility's advisory board 12 years ago by Governor Evan Bayh. Harris says he brings the voice of a former student to the board and is proud to serve the facility.

As a youngster at the Home, Harris became involved in school activities. He was on the chess, wrestling, track, tennis, and baseball teams. He made lasting friendships and came to think of ISSCH as his home, not an institution. He even had an opportunity to be adopted, but turned it down.

"I knew the support system at Knightstown. I had come from an unhealthy environment to one that's positive. I was very comfortable there and didn't want to leave," Harris explained.

A 1984 graduate of Indiana State University, Harris says the faculty and staff at the Children's Home care about each and every student.

"You become a piece of them. You get a sense that they care for you. The teachers are terrific. There's no better

environment than Knightstown," he says. "I just wish more people knew about it."

Children's Home Superintendent Paul Wilkinson was instrumental in Harris's turnaround from a youngster at-risk because of a turbulent home life in

Monticello to a success story at Knightstown. Wilkinson was Harris's "teacher sponsor," a unique aspect of Knightstown. Harris says each student is encouraged to pick a sponsor, someone he or she can connect with one-on-one.

"ISSCH wants to make sure that each student has one staff member who will make a positive impact in some way, shape, or form," he explained.

Wilkinson, who was the industrial arts teacher at the time, was that person for Harris. He listened to Harris's problems and he followed up to see if they were resolved. Wilkinson's advice was good,



Photo by Daniel Axler
Stained glass depiction of a Civil War sailor. The window hangs in Lincoln Hall auditorium on the Children's Home campus.

Consumer Protection hosts information sessions

More than 20 local health department representatives got a good look at the who, where, and how of the Indiana State Department of Health's **Consumer Protection** programs during a two-day Environmental Health Specialists Orientation.

The orientation, held December 2 and 3 at the State Department of Health, was designed to acquaint new local environmental health specialists with ISDH staff responsible for specific Consumer Protection program areas. Attendees also received a broad overview of the programs and information about the various forms required.

"This orientation was all about how we could assist the local health departments," said Lee Bray, Food Protection food scientist and facilitator of the orientation.

"It was a good opportunity to meet face to face with the environmental health specialists in the local health departments," he said. "They are really an extension of ISDH, and we wanted them to know that ... and know that we're here to help."

Bray said that those attending represented a variety of areas – some specialized in food protection, others in environmental protection, and others were generalists in smaller health departments where one person does everything.

Each attendee received packets of information that included copies of required forms, state laws and regulations, information on specific programs, educational material, and a list of the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of "whom to contact for what" in the areas of consumer protection and communicable disease, and at the state laboratories.

The orientation was geared toward helping the local environmental specialists learn



Photo by Daniel Axler

Class Photo: Environmental health specialists from local health departments line up for their "class photo" during the two-day orientation hosted by the Indiana State Department of Health. Lee Bray, Food Protection, is second from right.

how to find the answers they need from the ISDH. For instance, some speakers went over various forms and showed the attendees how to fill them out.

"We suggested, 'If you get to a form at work and are unsure, don't be afraid. Call us. We'll walk you through it,'" Bray said.

Some 16 speakers from the ISDH gave presentations to the group – from what viruses and bacteria can be in residential on-site sewage systems, to how to collect food samples in the case of foodborne disease outbreaks, to health requirements for new restaurants.

Larry Stump of Weights and Measures offered the services of the lab to test and calibrate the local health departments' food thermometers.

Mike Sinsko of Sanitary Engineer - Vector Control showed images of insects, like the mosquito that carries the West Nile virus, and talked about screening birds for West Nile virus and St. Louis encephalitis.

Hans Messersmith, Epidemiology Resource Center, spoke about the 10 new public health preparedness district field offices and said that the field epidemiologists and public health coordinators were available to assist the local health departments upon request.

The opening welcome was given by Terry Whitson, assistant commissioner, Health Care Regulatory Services. Other speakers and topics included Tim Decker and Chris Ulsas, residential on-site sewage systems; Dennis Ehlers, Sanitary Engineering plan review; Mike Hoover, swimming pools/campgrounds/mobile home parks; John Ruyack, indoor air/radon; Lora Bogda, foodborne disease; Scott Gilliam, Food Protection program overview/standardization/training/plan review;

Travis Goodman, food security; Shirley Vargas, wholesale foods; Heather Vaughan, complaints and samples; Tom Cronau, Laboratory support/microbiology; and Craig Hinshaw, chemistry/water samples.

Local health departments represented were Bartholomew County, Boone County, Clinton County, Delaware County, Hamilton County, Hammond City, Jay County, Kosciusko County, Marion County, Putnam County, Ripley County, St. Joseph County, and Vigo County.

HIPAA

Corner

HIPAA-covered health care organizations that have traditionally faxed health information to State Department of Health program areas are now seeking assurance that the receiving fax machines are "secure."

These organizations are requesting signed documentation that the receiving fax machine is secure in order to protect the health care organization in case unauthorized information is unintentionally sent.

ISDH's Office of HIPAA Compliance recommends that any ISDH program area receiving such a request forward the request to the Compliance Office. This will help prevent the possibility of committing the individual, the program area, or ISDH to vague, undefined, or inaccurate contract language.

The Compliance Office will prepare documentation identifying the security measures in place and contact the health care organization.

— Contributed by Lisa Mani,
ISDH Privacy Coordinator

Student: Wilkinson cared

(continued from page 3)

Harris said, adding that as a parent today he sees the wisdom of Wilkinson's advice even more.

"I knew that he cared. He was like a big brother to me. And I still look at him that way. Whenever I see him, I give him a big hug," he added.

Harris, who is married and has twin six-year-old daughters, says he has made a success of his life in large part because of his experiences at Knightstown.

"I'm not one of a few success stories. Knightstown has done that for thousands of kids. It's one of the programs that works. It's so important to the state of Indiana," he said firmly.

Correction

In the October 29 issue of *The Express*, STAR Award nominee Matt Doades was incorrectly identified. He is a Long-Term Care staff member. We apologize for the error.